

Hjelm Farmstead
U.S. Highway 20 at
New Sweden
Idaho Falls vicinity
Bonneville County
Idaho

HABS No. ID-111

HABS
ID
10-IDFAN,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Western Region
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California 94107

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HJELM FARMSTEAD

HABS No. ID-111

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1-

I. INTRODUCTION

Location: The Hjelm Farmstead is located along U.S. Highway 20 in the New Sweden area of Bonneville County, about three miles west of the city of Idaho Falls, Idaho

Quad: Idaho Falls South

UTM: Zone 12, 409560 Easting, 4816450 Northing

Date of Construction: c. 1905 to present

Present Owner: Idaho Transportation Department

Present Use: Farmstead

Significance: The Hjelm Farmstead is significant for its association with Swedish and Swedish-American settlement in the rural New Sweden and Riverview areas of Idaho. These communities reflect Swedish patterns of settlement and the immigrants' adaptation to American lifeways. The Hjelm Farmstead is also significant as a representative example of turn-of-the-century farmstead architecture.

Historian: Lon Johnson
Renewable Technologies, Inc.
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II. HISTORY

A. INTRODUCTION

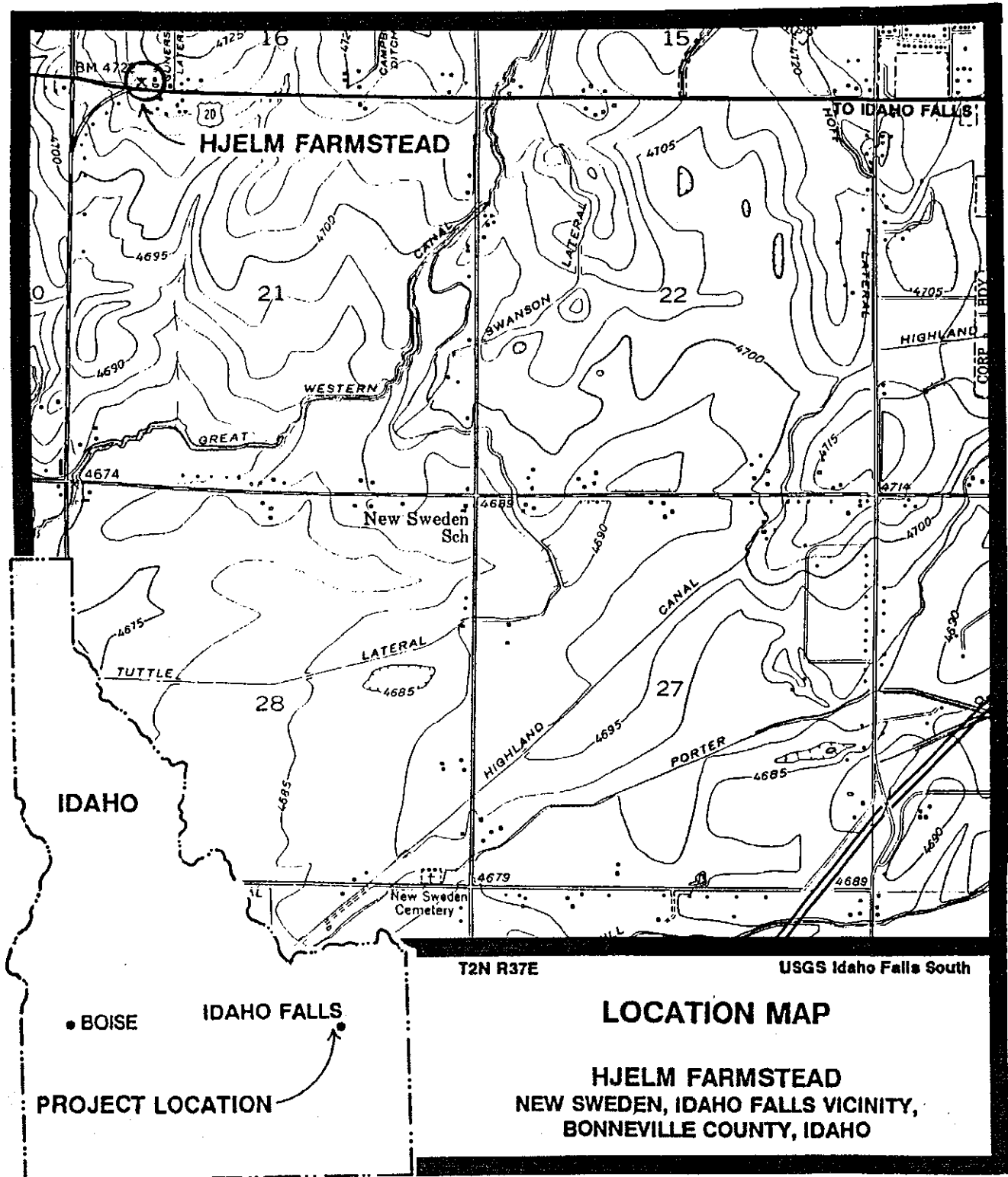
The Hjelm Farmstead is located about three miles west of Idaho Falls, Idaho in a rural area known as New Sweden. A cohesive community of Swedish-Americans settled in the area between 1895 and 1900. Small numbers of Swedes moved from and into the area after the initial settlement period. The Hjelm family were among the later immigrants who kept the number of Swedish-American families in the area fairly fixed. An in-depth description of Swedish-American settlement in Idaho, and the New Sweden area, can be found in the National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, "Swedish-American Farmsteads and Institutional Buildings in New Sweden and Riverview, Idaho" by Jennifer Eastman Attebery.¹ Most of the following historical background is taken from that form.

B. NEW SWEDEN AND RIVERVIEW HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the first United States census taken in Idaho Territory, in 1870, there were only 91 Swedish-born residents. Swedes began coming to the territory in large numbers during the 1880s. The number of Swedish-born Idahoans gradually rose to a peak in 1910-1920, and has declined since then. Swedes and the other Scandinavian groups made up a substantial percentage of Idaho's foreign-born population. Between 1910 and 1930 one-quarter of the state's foreign-born residents were Swedish, Danish, or Norwegian.

Like the Swedish population of the United States in general, a large number of Idaho's Swedish settlers were farmers, although the majority settled in urban areas. In 1930, for example, 36 percent of Idaho's Swedes were engaged in farming. Many of them got their start in farming by working as hired hands for already-established farmers.

The Swedish population in Idaho concentrated in two general regions, north Idaho and southeast Idaho. Swedes came to southeast Idaho in two distinct migrations. From Midwestern and Rocky Mountain states such as Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Montana, and Colorado, Swedes came into agricultural tracts being opened up to farming by various irrigation projects beginning in the 1890s.



Lands in New Sweden and Riverview were part of the Great Western Canal System's irrigation development, a Snake River irrigation project that also took in non-Swedish Mormon communities to the north and south and between the two communities. Filings for water rights were first put forward in 1886 for the Porter Canal and in 1891 for the Great Western Canal. Modest development provided water to farms owned by a few initial settlers, who were not of Swedish descent.

In 1894, the Great Western Land and Irrigation Company was formed to develop lands to be irrigated by the Great Western Canal System. The company promoted the development to Swedish communities in the Midwestern United States through local presentations and advertisements in Swedish-American newspapers. Farmers in Midwestern states like Nebraska and Iowa were susceptible to promotional schemes during the mid-1890s. During the Panic of 1893 and the ensuing national recession, many immigrants relocated to the Far West.

The first Swedish-American settlers arrived in New Sweden in the summer of 1894. On March 15 of the following year, an excursion railway train supplied by the Great Western Canal promoters arrived with twenty more Swedish-American families, according to Idaho Falls newspaper reports. By 1900, thirty-one Swedish-American families had settled in New Sweden; seven, in Riverview. Most of the arable land in the New Sweden area was claimed, and the number of Swedish families remained the same in 1910 as it was in 1900. Some families had moved in, and a few had moved elsewhere. After 1910, both communities continued to attract a few Swedish and Swedish-American immigrants.

Additional land was opened for settlement in New Sweden during the 1900 to 1910 decade when the State of Idaho sold some of its school trust lands. Upon statehood, Idaho, like most other Western states, had received two sections in every township for the endowment of the public school system.² The states were permitted to sell this land subject to certain federal restrictions on size and price.³ Presumably, Idaho found it advantageous to sell land in New Sweden at the time since it was within an already settled irrigation district.

The typical adult in the New Sweden and Riverview areas immigrated to the United States as teenagers or young adults. The average age of immigration was 22 for men and 28 for women. (Median ages were 20 and 23, respectively.) A preponderance of young men who immigrated as 17- to 21-year-olds represented a response to Sweden's universal conscription laws, as well as a response to the division and re-division of ancestral farms in Sweden. Young women frequently immigrated as brides or brides-to-be joining men who had preceded them to the New World.

These young people came to the United States with work experience garnered on Swedish farms, or--less commonly--in sawmills, in mines, or on factory-estates. They came from various Swedish provinces, but many were from the areas that contributed most greatly to the North American immigration in general: Waermland, Smaaland, and Vaestergotland.

The immigrants to New Sweden and Riverview had gained further experience in the Midwest before coming to Idaho. On average, settlers in New Sweden had come to the United States by 1888, acquiring six years' experience before the New Sweden project opened up in 1894. In Riverview, settlers had come to the United States, on average, by 1893. Most had lived in Nebraska or Iowa; a few came to Idaho via Illinois, Ohio, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Colorado, Montana, or Utah. In Oakland, Nebraska, promotional talks by the Great Western developers were particularly successful. The Swedes' cumulative experience from Sweden and the Midwest could not prepare them, however, for irrigated agriculture. The reminiscences of the second generation frequently focus on this key aspect of adaptation to Western agriculture.

Settlement in New Sweden and Riverview proceeded in stages that can be characterized as an initial settlement era (1894-1905), and era of community-building (1905-1920), and an era of transition (1920-1941). During the first era, temporary shelters were built, farms were laid out and irrigation networks begun, churches and schools were founded, and buildings were erected for these institutions. Construction of buildings was accomplished by the settlers themselves or by the few carpenters among them. As one second-generation New Sweden resident points out, nearly every Swedish farmer possessed woodworking skills that were useful for constructing necessities such as a first house and trestlework and other wooden structures for the irrigation system. During the second era, temporary housing was replaced with substantial farmhouses, early housing was remodeled, large barns were built, and farmsteads expanded to resemble their current configurations. During the third era, the communities felt the impact of the depression years, a growing population, and automobile travel. This was an era of gradual adaptation to the culture of the surrounding region. Houses built in this period, still constructed by Swedish-American carpenters, were straight-forward renditions of pattern-book styles, primarily the Bungalow and Picturesque styles.

C. HJELM FARMSTEAD HISTORY

Albert Hjelm purchased 40 acres of school trust lands in New Sweden from the State of Idaho on October 24, 1904.⁴ He was about 21 years old at the time.⁵ No other biographical information was located on Hjelm, and whether he was born in Sweden or the United States is not known. Hjelm married Julia Signe Swenson five months after he purchased the farm. She was born in Sweden and came to the United States in 1904.⁶ The Hjelm's completed payments on the \$400 purchase in 1908.⁷ One year later, they sold the property to Arthur W. Holden, an Idaho Falls attorney, for \$2,400. The sale was subject to two mortgages totalling \$1,000.⁸ The Hjelm's then moved to a larger--120 acre--farm in Riverview.⁹

The significant increase in the value of the property during the Hjelm's five year ownership indicates that they made substantial physical improvements on the farm. Of the existing buildings, the house is the only building that would have justified the increase. It is not documented, however, whether the house or any of the existing buildings were constructed by the Hjelm's. Supposition about the sales price is complicated by the farm's location in an irrigation district. The price may at least partially reflect acquisition of irrigation water rights and/or an irrigation delivery system after purchase of the property.

In 1911, Theodore Erickson purchased the Hjelm Farmstead from Arthur and Mercedes Holden for \$2720.¹⁰ Theodore, and his wife, Anna, owned the farm for the next 30 years,¹¹ although they lived there for only about ten years. One longtime area resident believes that a Peter Erickson built the existing house for Theodore Erickson (relationship unknown).¹² Although the earlier sales price of the farm brings this statement into question, it is possible that the existing house is a second-generation house, or that an earlier house on the farm burned necessitating the construction of a new house.

In the early 1920s, the Ericksons moved to Turlock, California.¹³ They presumably joined family or other members of the New Sweden community who had moved there earlier to assist the New Sweden Swedish Covenant Church in establishing an irrigation project.¹⁴ The Ericksons returned to their New Sweden farm for a short time during the Depression, but then moved back to California. The farm was rented during their absence.¹⁵

In 1941, Theodore and Anna Erickson sold the farm to C.W. Mulhall.¹⁶ Two years later, the Federal Land Bank of Spokane sold it to Kenneth and Edna Wood.¹⁷ The Woods are credited with construction of two of the Hjelm Farmstead's buildings during the mid-1940s--the potato cellar and an implement shed.¹⁸

III. DESCRIPTION OF THE HJELM FARMSTEAD

The Hjelm Farmstead (see following page and HABS photographs ID-111) fronts the north side of U.S. Highway 20 about three miles west of Idaho Falls. The farmstead consists of six historic buildings and structures (two of these were built in 1944-45) and one recently constructed quonset hut. Several new farm structures and a new house have been built beyond the north edge of the historic farmyard. Most obviously missing from the typical New Sweden farmstead is a barn, but the small acreage of the farm may not have required such a substantial building. A windbreak of deciduous and conifer trees surrounds the house.

None of the buildings at the Hjelm Farmstead readily display stylistic features that can be attributed to their Swedish-American builders. The Hjelm Farmstead house, like others built on New Sweden farmsteads after the turn-of-the-century, was likely influenced by American pattern book designs. Although it has been suggested that the Swedish-Americans may have selected standardized designs reflective of their cultural background, such obvious and identifiable characteristics as a prominent gabled, wall dormer over the front entry, are not found in the design of the Hjelm house.

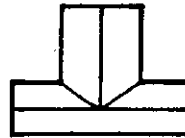
The Hjelm Farmstead House (see HABS photographs ID-111-A) is a one-and-one-half story gable front house with a one-story-kitchen wing at the rear. The house is rectangular, measuring 24 feet 1 inch by 28 feet; the rear wing measures 15 feet 7 inches by 14 feet 10 inches. A modern addition was added to the east side of the kitchen wing about 1975.

The house rests on a parged, lava rock foundation. The walls are brick-bearing. The brick is standard-sized, but of a light-gray color. The bricks have a frog (depression) in one side measuring 2 inches by 6 inches with angled sides. The origin of the brick is not known, although Keiter's 1911-12 directory for Idaho Falls lists five brick manufacturers in the Idaho Falls area.¹⁹ In the gable ends, the brick walls extend to about the ceiling level of the second floor; the area above the brick is shingled. The roof has exposed rafter tails and is covered with wood shingles.

IMPLEMENT SHED No. 2



QUONSET



GRANARY

IMPLEMENT SHED No. 1



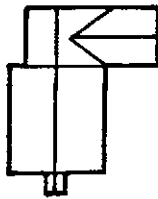
BARN



WINDMILL

HEDGE

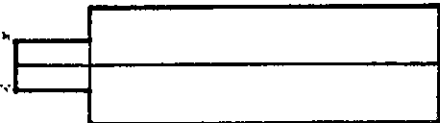
HOUSE



GRAVELED DRIVEWAY

WINDBREAK

POTATO CELLAR



U.S. HIGHWAY 20

SITE PLAN

SCALE 1" = 50'



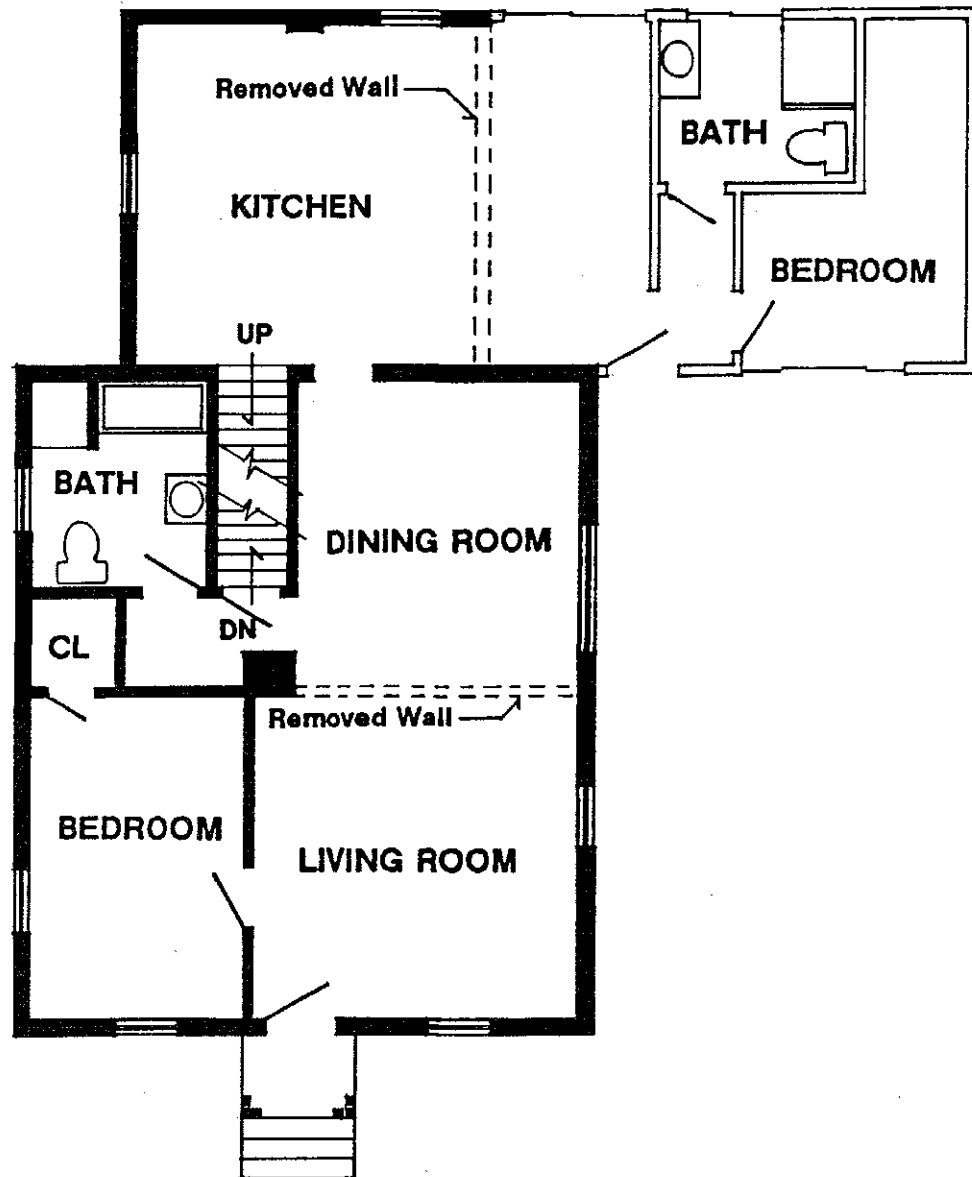
HJELM FARMSTEAD
New Sweden,
Idaho Falls Vicinity,
Bonneville County,
Idaho

Soffits are beaded tongue-and-groove. Corbelled brick chimneys rise from near the middle of the ridge and from the north wall of the kitchen wing at the ridge. All historic windows in the main body of the house are one-over-one double-hung units with segmental brick arches and rusticated concrete lug-sills.

The front facade of the house is symmetrical. A centrally located door is flanked by single windows at the first floor. Two similar windows are located at the second story. A small pedimented window in the gable end has been blocked. The eight-light Craftsman style front door opens onto a small concrete stoop with a gable roof. The roof is supported by three 4- by 4-inch posts at each front corner. The soffit is covered with tongue-and-groove boards. The concrete stoop, the posts, and the soffit material differing from that of the house all suggest that the porch was re-built at some time. A full-length front porch would have provided the house with an appearance similar to many farmhouses in the West, but no physical evidence of a larger porch was found.

The west facade has two double-hung windows--one placed near the north end and one near the south end. The east facade has one double-hung window and a multi-paned sash that fills a larger opening. Physical evidence indicates that the latter opening originally held a pair of double-hung windows. The kitchen wing has one double-hung window on the north and west sides. These windows have flat concrete lintels. The east wall of the wing was removed when a wood-frame addition was added about 1975. The addition is covered with panelized wood siding and has an asphalt shingle roof.

The interior of the house has been extensively remodeled over time--almost all of the historic materials have been replaced. The main body of the house was originally divided into four rooms. A living room and dining room were located on the east side (the wall separating these rooms has been removed) and a bedroom and bathroom (it is not known whether the bathroom is original, or whether it was another bedroom) are located on the west side. An enclosed stairway off the dining room, and paralleling the bathroom, provided access to the second floor. The stairway has been reversed and this end now provides access to the basement. The kitchen is located in the rear wing. The reversed stairway now provides access to the second floor from this room. The east wall of the kitchen has been removed, but probably held a rear door which opened onto a side porch.

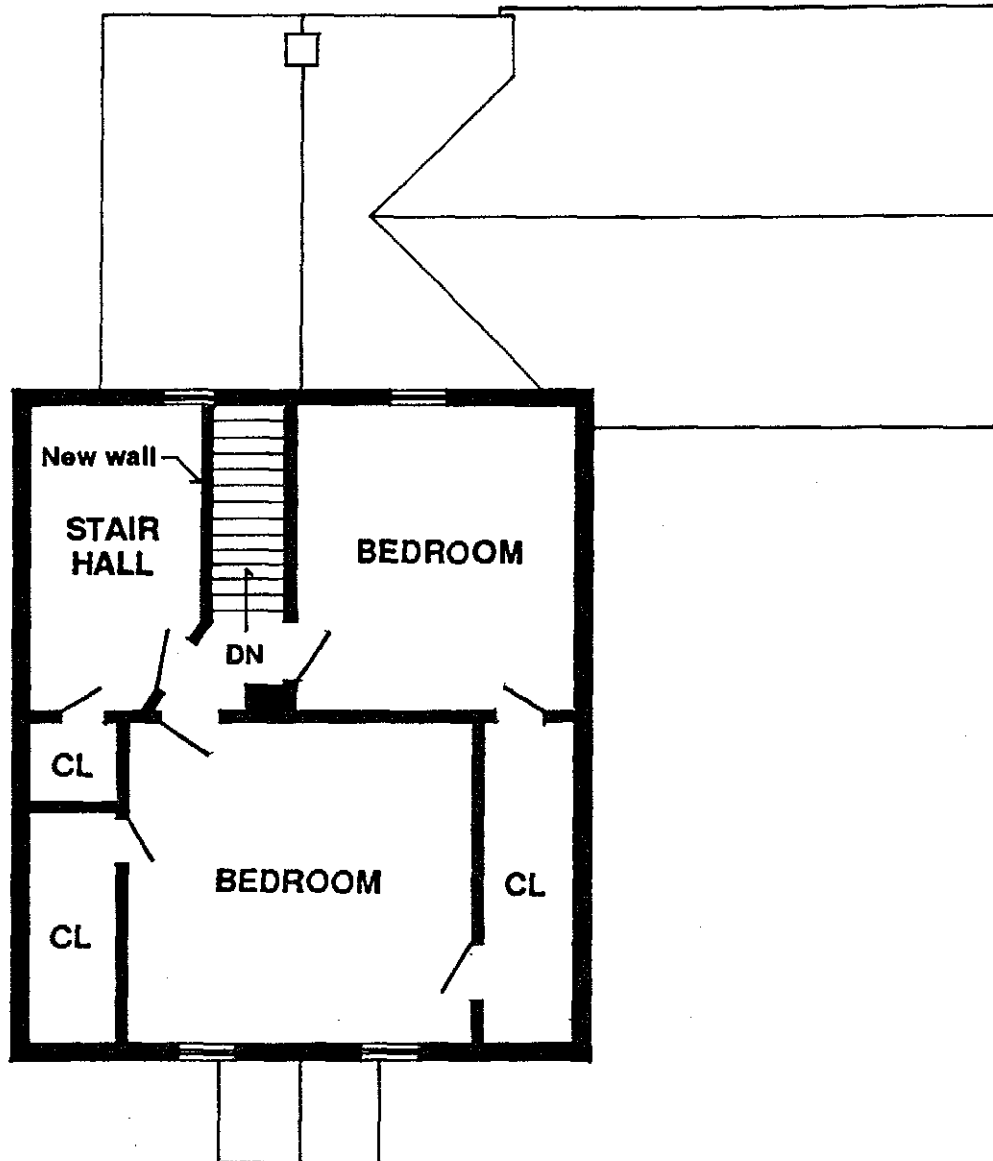


FIRST FLOOR PLAN

SCALE $1/8" = 1'-0"$



HJELM FARMSTEAD HOUSE
New Sweden, Idaho Falls Vicinity,
Bonneville County, Idaho



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"



HJELM FARMSTEAD HOUSE
New Sweden, Idaho Falls Vicinity,
Bonneville County, Idaho

The second floor of the house originally had two bedrooms and a stair hall room. A bedroom, across most of the front of the house, has full length closets along both sides. Before their reversal, the stairs entered a stair hall at the northwest corner of the house. The stair hall room is now enclosed as a bedroom.

The Potato Cellar (see HABS photographs ID-111-B) is located just to the east of the farmyard driveway, at its entrance from the highway. The cellar was constructed by Kenneth Wood about 1945.²⁰ The structure measures 92 feet 5 inches by 31 feet 7 inches with an 18 foot 5 inch by 13 foot 9 inch entrance on the west end. The main potato cellar has 7 foot 4 inch high concrete walls placed largely below ground level. (Two concrete buttresses have been added for additional support along the north and south walls.) The roof structure is composed of 3- by 12-inch rafters with 2- by 12-inch rafter ties. The roof is sheathed with diagonal 1- by 6-inch boards. A layer of straw bales is placed on the sheathing; the bales are in turn covered with dirt. Corrugated metal clads the exterior of the wood frame gable ends. The wood frame entrance has a wood shingled gable roof with exposed rafter tails. It is sheathed with drop siding. A pair of outward swinging doors takes up most of the west end. The north door is original and is constructed of horizontal boards; the south door has been replaced with plywood. The dirt floor of the entrance slopes downward to meet the dirt floor of the main storage area. A pair of inward swinging plywood doors provide entry to the cellar.

Implement Shed No. 1 (see HABS photographs ID-111-C) is located just to the northwest of the house, on the west side of the farmyard driveway. The building, measuring 58 feet 3 inches by 22 feet 5 inches, was constructed in 1944-45 by Kenneth Wood.²¹ The east side of the building is divided into six bays. The three northern bays have vertical tongue-and-groove rolling doors; the three southern bays are open. The building has a concrete foundation, dirt floor, and wood frame walls. The north, west, and south walls are sheathed with drop siding. The salt box-style roof is constructed of 2- by 4-inch rafters and covered with wood shingles laid on spaced boards. A one-half light, wood person door is located on the south end of the building.

Implement Shed No. 2 (see HABS photographs ID-111-D) is located in-line with, and to the north of, Implement Shed No. 1. A modern quonset hut separates the two buildings. Implement Shed No. 2 measures 60 feet 5 inches by 26 feet. The east side of the building is open and divided into six bays. The building has a concrete foundation, dirt floor, and wood frame walls. The north, west, and south walls are

sheathed with drop siding. The salt box-style roof is constructed of 2- by 4-inch rafters and covered with wood shingles laid on spaced boards. The ridge is capped with a galvanized roll with galvanized balls at either end.

A Granary (see HABS photographs ID-111-E) is located at the northern end of the historic farmyard. The structure was constructed in two phases. The original structure measures 46 feet 4 inches by 14 feet and rests on a lava rock foundation. The wood frame walls are sheathed with 1- by 6-inch boards and sided with drop siding. The gable roof is constructed of 2- by 4-inch rafters with exposed rafter tails. It is covered with wood shingles laid on spaced boards. The rear addition measures 19 feet 5 inches by 20 feet 3 inches and has a concrete foundation. The wood frame walls are sided on the exterior with drop siding and on the interior with tongue-and-groove boards. Openings in the structure include a pair of vertical tongue-and-groove rolling doors on the south side and small doors near the rafter plate providing access to each of the bins. The interior is divided into four grain bins--two in the original building on either side of a driveway and two in the addition.

A Small Barn (see HABS photographs ID-111-F) is located between the Granary and the Potato Cellar on the east side of the farmyard drive. The building measures 18 feet 4 inches by 14 feet 4 inches and sits on a newer concrete foundation. The gable roof is constructed of 2- by 4-inch rafters with exposed rafter tails. It is covered with wood shingles. The wood frame building is clad with drop siding on the south side and vertical boards on the east, north, and west sides. Vertical board person doors are located on the east and west ends.

A windmill is located just to the south of the Small Barn. The windmill tower is constructed of angle iron sections with horizontal angle iron bracing. A ladder made from steel bars is located on the north side. The blades of the windmill are missing, but the rudder is still extant. Painted on the rudder is: "Dempster/Mill MFG Co. No. 8/Beatrice, Neb. 1912/Patent April 16, 1907."

IV. FUTURE OF THE PROPERTY

The Idaho Transportation Department (ITD), with the assistance of the Federal Highway Administration, plans to widen a 3.5 mile segment of U.S. Highway 20 immediately west of the Idaho Falls city limits. The existing two-lane highway was constructed about 40 years ago, and is inadequate for the current traffic load. The proposed reconstruction project is a five-lane highway. The improved highway will result in the loss of part of the historic fabric which qualified the New Sweden and Riverview areas for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. These losses include the demolition of the house and potato cellar at the Hjelm Farmstead and the demolition of the house at the adjoining Gunnarson Farmstead.

A cultural resource survey in 1991 along the existing route of U.S. Highway 20 identified a number of properties eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Subsequently, a Multiple Property Documentation Form, "Swedish-American Farmsteads and Institutional Buildings in New Sweden and Riverview, Idaho," was accepted by the Keeper of the National Register as a basis for evaluating the properties.

As part of its planning process, the ITD evaluated five alternatives for the reconstruction project. It was found that all alternatives, with the exception of a no-build alternative, would affect historic properties to varying degrees.

In accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the Federal Highway Administration, the Idaho Transportation Department, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the Idaho State Historic Preservation Officer determined in 1991 that the reconstruction project would have an adverse effect on properties eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. To mitigate this adverse effect, the ITD agreed to undertake recordation of two of the properties to the standards of the Historic American Building Survey (HABS). This historical narrative and accompanying photographs are the principal products of the HABS survey.

V. ENDNOTES

1. United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "Swedish-American Farmsteads and Institutional Buildings in New Sweden and Riverview, Idaho," by Jennifer Eastman Attebery. Copy located at Idaho State Historic Preservation Office, Boise.
2. Samuel Trask Dana, Forest and Range Policy (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1956), 34-35.
3. Montana Department of Agriculture and Publicity, The Resources and Opportunities of Montana (Helena: Independent Publishing Company, 1914), 144.
4. Bonneville County Clerk and Recorder's Office, Deed Book Y, 663.
5. Post Register (Idaho Falls), 14 November 1937.
6. Post Register (Idaho Falls), 10 December 1973.
7. Bonneville County Clerk and Recorder's Office, Deed Book Y, 663.
8. Bonneville County Clerk and Recorder's Office, Deed Book R, 199.
9. Post Register (Idaho Falls), 10 December 1973. Obituary of Julia Signe Hjelm.
10. Bonneville County Clerk and Recorder's Office, Deed Book 2, 44.
11. Bonneville County Clerk and Recorder's Office, Deed Book 47, 125.
12. Milo Beckman, Telephone interview by Mary McCormick, 13 July 1994. Mr. Beckman's dates are not always accurate.
13. Ibid.; Don Erickson, Telephone interview by Mary McCormick, 12 July 1994.
14. United States Department of the Interior, "Swedish-American Farmsteads and Institutional Buildings in New Sweden and Riverview, Idaho."
15. Milo Beckman, Telephone interview by Mary McCormick, 13 July 1994; Don Erickson, Telephone interview by Mary McCormick, 12 July 1994.
16. Bonneville County Clerk and Recorder's Office, Deed Book 47, 125.
17. Bonneville County Clerk and Recorder's Office, Deed Book 45, 392.
18. Jeannine Beckman, Interview with Mary McCormick, 13 July 1994. Jeannine Beckman is Kenneth and Edna Wood's daughter.
19. Geo. P. Keiter's Idaho Falls City and Bonneville, Bingham and Fremont Counties, Idaho Directory, 1911-1912 (St. Paul: Keiter Directory Company, 1911).

20. Jeannine Beckman, Interview with Mary McCormick, 13 July 1994.
21. Ibid.

VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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U.S. Department of the Interior. National Park Service. "Swedish-American Farmsteads and Institutional Buildings in New Sweden and Riverview, Idaho," by Jennifer Eastman Attebery. Copy located at Idaho State Historic Preservation Office, Boise.